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### **Says the families of those who have served our country deserve to grieve in peace**

April 29, 2011

CONCORD, NH – Congressman Charles F. Bass (NH-02) recently introduced bipartisan legislation in the House of Representatives that would preserve dignity at military funerals and allow families to grieve in peace. The legislation would amend existing law to protect military funerals by limiting disruptions and increasing the buffer zone around services.

The Sanctity of Eternal Rest for Veterans (SERVE) Act (H.R. 1591) will limit disruptions by increasing the quiet time before and after military funeral services from 60 minutes to 120 minutes, increasing the buffer around a military funeral service from 150 feet to 300 feet, increasing the buffer around access routes to a funeral service area from 300 feet to 500 feet, and increasing civil penalties on violators.

Speaking at a press conference in Concord with members of New Hampshire veterans organizations on Friday, Bass said:

"The brave men and women who have fought and died for our country deserve the greatest dignity and respect, and their families deserve to be able to grieve in peace. The SERVE Act will preserve dignity at these solemn events while still protecting the First Amendment rights that our nation's heroes have fought for. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the House to move this legislation forward."

In 2007, the Westboro Baptist Church (WBC) held a protest at the funeral of Army Captain Jonathan Grassbaugh from Hampstead, who was killed by an IED while bravely serving his country on patrol in Iraq. Although Grassbaugh was buried at Arlington National Cemetery, his funeral services were held in Hampstead and were protested by members of the WBC.

In response to this, then-Senator Bob Letourneau (R-Derry) introduced legislation in the New Hampshire State Senate "establishing a New Hampshire Medal of Honor and prohibiting funeral protesters." When it was signed into law by Governor John Lynch in 2007, the State of New Hampshire joined over 30 other states to create boundaries similar to those established in the SERVE Act.

The military support groups and veterans organizations supporting the SERVE Act include the Gold Star Wives of America, the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States, the Marine Corps League, the Military Officers Association of America, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, the Non Commissioned Officers Association, and Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Bass' bill is companion legislation to a bipartisan bill introduced by U.S. Senator Olympia Snowe (R-ME). Congressman Jim Matheson (UT-02) is an original cosponsor of Bass' bill, which has been referred to the House Armed Services Committee, the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and

the Judiciary Committee.

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